

NEWSEUM PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

News Confusion: What Is News?

Rationale/Main Concept: What types of things, when they happen, are considered news? In this activity, students will play a fast-paced sorting game that will get them thinking about what types of events and stories make it into the headlines. They'll learn about the 10 categories the Newseum uses to define what is news, and they'll take a look at front pages from around the world to start a discussion about why news is different depending on where you are.

Time: 45 minutes

Grades: 4th–8th grade; different procedures for 4th–6th graders and 6th–8th graders

Materials:

- Three sets of “News Confusion” game headlines included in this packet, with individual headlines cut apart
- Three sets of Newseum “What Is News?” category signs included in this packet, cut apart
- A selection of today’s front pages from the Newseum Web site:
<http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/default.asp>
If you do not have easy online access in your classroom, print out a few of the front pages from different states and different countries to use at the front of the class.

Objectives — Students/Participants Will Be Able to:

- Define “news”
- List several of the 10 different categories of news
- Explain why news might be different in different places

Procedure for 4th–6th grade students:

- What is news? Ask students for their ideas. Explain that news is information that people need. Tell them the Newseum has made a list of 10 categories of things that are news when they happen. Put the list up on the board or overhead and go through what each category means using the examples provided, or your own examples, to illustrate them.

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- **Firsts** — stories about the first man on the moon or the first athlete to win eight gold medals in a single Olympics
 - **Life** — stories about a famous person having a baby or about a person living to a very old age; stories that we can all understand because they are about experiences we share
 - **Hate** — stories about terrorist attacks or segregation in America
 - **Freedom** — stories about a protest in Washington or the emancipation of the slaves in America
 - **War** — stories about battles in Iraq and Afghanistan or about the life of a family waiting for a soldier to come home from war
 - **Death** — stories about a famous person dying or about a fatal car crash
 - **Sacrifice** — stories about a person working long hours to support their family or about an athlete training hard to break a record
 - **Peace** — stories about the end of a war or two gangs getting together to talk about stopping fighting
 - **Love** — stories about famous people getting married (romantic love) or a person working to help the poor (brotherly love)
 - **Breakthroughs** — stories about finally achieving a dream or goal or about discovering a new medicine
- Divide your class into three teams. Tell them they're about to play a game called "News Confusion." Each team will be given an assortment of news headlines. They will also get signs for each of the 10 "What Is News?" categories. Their task is to lay out the category signs and then sort their set of headlines into those different categories. The team that organizes their headlines the fastest wins!
 - When the race is over, give all the teams time to finish sorting. Then have each group present which headlines they put into which categories.

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- There are no wrong answers as long as students can explain why a certain story fits a certain category. Did different groups sort the headlines in different ways? Discuss why. (Many stories fit into more than one category.)
- Show students an assortment of today's front pages from the Newseum Web site. Pick two or three newspapers from other states and two or three from other countries. Talk about which categories these front-page stories would fit into. Why do different newspapers have different stories on their front pages? (What is news depends on where you live. A story about a hurricane hitting Florida will be more important in Florida than in Japan.)

Procedure for 6th–8th grade students:

- Divide your class into three teams. Tell them they're about to play a game called "News Confusion." Each team will be given an assortment of news headlines. Their task is to come up with categories to put the jumble in order and then sort the headlines into those categories. For example, a team might decide to put all the stories about sports together in one pile and all the stories about science in another pile. Or a team could decide to put all the stories about famous people in one pile and all the stories about everyday people in another pile. Or a team could decide to put good news in one pile and bad news in another pile — the ways to organize are endless. The team that organizes their headlines the fastest wins.
- When the race is over, give all the teams time to finish sorting. Then have each group present the categories they invented for sorting and which headlines they put in each category. If time allows, play the game again, but have each team come up with a new set of categories to organize the headlines.
- What is news? Ask students for their ideas. They can draw on the game they just played and the categories they invented in this discussion. Tell them the Newseum has made a list of 10 categories of things that are news when they happen. Put the list up on the board or overhead and go through what each category means using examples to illustrate them.
 - **Firsts** — stories about the first man on the moon or the first athlete to win eight gold medals in a single Olympics
 - **Life** — stories about a famous individual having a baby or about a person living to a very old age; stories that we can all understand because they are about experiences we share

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- **Hate** — stories about terrorist attacks or segregation in America
 - **Freedom** — stories about a protest in Washington or the emancipation of the slaves in America
 - **War** — stories about battles in Iraq and Afghanistan or about the life of a family waiting for a soldier to come home from war
 - **Death** — stories about a famous person dying or about a fatal car crash
 - **Sacrifice** — stories about a person working long hours to support their family or about an athlete training hard to break a record
 - **Peace** — stories about the end of a war or two gangs getting together to talk about stopping fighting
 - **Love** — stories about famous people getting married (romantic love) or a person working to help the poor (brotherly love)
 - **Breakthroughs** — stories about finally achieving a dream or goal or about discovering a new medicine
- Tell the students you're going to play "News Confusion" one more time. Give each team a set of signs for the 10 "What Is News?" categories. Have them race to sort the headlines into these 10 categories.
 - When the race is over, give all the teams time to finish sorting. Then have each group present which headlines they put into which categories.
 - There are no wrong answers as long as students can explain why a certain story fits a certain category. Did different groups sort the headlines in different ways? Discuss why. (Many stories fit in more than one of the 10 categories.)
 - Show students an assortment of today's front pages from the Newseum Web site. Pick two or three newspapers from other states and two or three from other countries. Talk about which categories these front-page stories would fit into. Why do different newspapers have different stories on their front pages? (What is news depends on where you live. A story about a hurricane hitting Florida will be more important in Florida than in Japan.)

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Lesson Extension:

- As a warm-up activity before doing another lesson in this packet or to remind students about their upcoming trip to the Newseum, go online with your students to the Newseum's "Today's Front Pages" Web site. Have the students read aloud the headlines for a few of the newspapers' lead stories and decide into which of the "What Is News?" categories the stories fit.
- Or, find two front pages online that both cover the same national story with different headlines. Do both headlines sound like they fit in the same category or categories? Can a headline shape into which category a story fits?

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PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Soccer Team Wins First District Championship

Scientist Finds Cure for Common Cold

Student Wins Award for Community Service

U.S. Forces Fight Battle in Iraq

Movie Star Gives Birth to Triplets

Famous Businesswoman Dies

**Great-Great-Grandmother Celebrates Her
100th Birthday**

**Fighting Breaks Out Between Countries in
Central America**

NEWSEUM PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Sister Donates Kidney to Save Brother's Life

Company Reveals First Trash-Powered Car

Group Works to Help Get Teens Out of Gangs

Immigrants Celebrate Becoming Citizens

Massive Protest in Local Park

Mayor To Be Married on Saturday

**India and Pakistan to Discuss
End to Fighting Along Border**

Fishing Boat Sinks, Three People Dead

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**Video-Game Champion Says
Practice Is Key to Success**

Students Collect Food for Homeless Shelter

Racist Poster Found Outside Library

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NEWSEUM | FIRSTS

NEWSEUM | LIFE

NEWSEUM | DEATH

NEWSEUM | WAR

NEWSEUM | SACRIFICE

NEWSEUM | HATE

NEWSEUM | FREEDOM

NEWSEUM | LOVE

NEWSEUM | PEACE

NEWSEUM | BREAKTHROUGHS